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ABSTRACT

The Content Area Study Experiences (CASE) system is designed to provide students with study experiences based on conceptual frameworks which transcend the limitations of content. Addressing the wide range of abilities, interests, and levels of achievement among the student population, the CASE model operationalizes essential skills and offers vital learning experiences by enabling students to construct and select schemata for study purposes in various aspects of the language arts. Knowledge, analysis, evaluation and application are developed in the form of a study guide in which students may select from a variety of questions involving the various levels of the cognitive taxonomy, a gradual progression through the higher-order thinking skills, and the choice of either left-brain, right-brain, or whole-brain activities. The CASE model also provides numerous, on-going opportunities for teachers to maintain meaningful dialogue with students regarding their educational needs and progress. (Two figures illustrating the CASE model and a study guide for language arts are included.) (KEH)

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Study Experiences for the Language Arts

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Today, in most classrooms, there is a wide range of abilities, interests and levels of achievement among the student population. It, therefore, becomes necessary for teachers to be knowledgeable of methodologies that aid in the ever-present challenge of individualization , and assist teachers in understanding how the various learning processes integrate to form a workable system that can easily be applied. Additionally, in order to foster student independence and encourage higher order thinking, any system needs to consider what the literature says about how the brain operates and the teaching Of thinking. Paul (1989, p.62), for example, claims teachers need to "...redesign lessons so that they'll encourage more critical thinking on the part of the students. Throughout the process, the teacher should have clearly in mind an ideal of education and the genuinely educated person."

Content Area Study Experiences (C.A.S.E) is a system that applies selected levels of Bloom's cognitive taxonomy so as to couple right-and left-brain processes with higher order thinking processes. This coupling provides a strategy that gives teachers flexibility in adapting assignments to individual needs of students by expecting students to independently apply right-and left-brain processes while using several higher order thinking skills strategies.

In a discussion of using brain-based approaches to learning and teaching, Caine and Caine (1990) address several principles for brain-based education based on what researchers say about how the brain processes information. In the article, Caine and Caine (1990) make two comments that are supportive of C.A.S.E. as a system. They write:

> As no one method or technique can by itself adequately encompass the variations of the human brain, teachers need a frame of reference that enables them to select from the vast array of methods and approaches that are available (p. 66).

> Learners are patterning all the time in one way or the other. We cannot stop them, we can only influence the direction. Day-dreaming is a form of patterning, so are problem solving and critical thinking. Although we choose much of what students are to learn, we should, rather than attempt to impose patterns, present the information in a way that allows brains to extract patterns...For teaching to be really effective, a learner must be able to create meaningful and personally relevant patterns (p. 67).

Also, research shows that each of the brain's hemispheres processes information differently (McCarthy, 1987). The left hemisphere, for instance, sees information in a linear, sequential manner; the right hemisphere, however, sees information in a global, holistic manner. McCarthy (1987, p. 71) suggests, therefore, that "what" we educators need to do is to develop teaching methodologies which will effectively teach to both (hemispheres)." C.A.S.E, as a system, gives teachers a frame of reference to assist students in thinking about information using left-brain, right-brain, and whole-brain processes. Further, the system does this at each level of the taxonomy. Thus, students are expected to use at least one of the brain processess, depending upon the assignment, at various levels of complexity. Also, throughout the system, regardless of the brain-based process, students continuously develop relevant patterns of thinking about something.

Hart (1983, p. 60) writes, "the brain detects, constructs, and elaborates patterns as a basic, built-in, natural function." When one thinks about it, what Hart suggests makes sense. He also suggests, however, that educators have not learned that or, perhaps, do not understand what that means. Basically, what he is contending is that any human's brain detects and constructs its own patterns from the confusion of the world. Hart further suggests that the brain shuts down ("downshifts") if the risks of learning or experiencing are too threatening to warrant taking the risk even though some element of risk is necessary to challenge humans to stretch themselves. Hart (1983, p. 165) explains, therefore, that "...brain-compatible learning demands activities that offer students the degree of risk they choose (within reason), and the opportunity to carry them out in nonthreat or very low-threat circumstances." As such, the C.A.S.E system is developed so that students are assisted in building accurate patterns, and in making clearer sense out of the confusion, in a nonthreatening, low-risk process.

Extending this thought, Costa (1985, p. ix) says, "Helping students become effective thinkers is increasingly recognized as a primary goal of education. Rapid expansion of knowledge points to the importance of curriculums that empower students to locate and process knowledge rather than simply memorize facts." Consequently, the C.A.S.E. system has been developed around four processes that its developers believe are essential elements of effective thinking. As Beyer (1988, p. 215) recommends, it is better to include a few important thinking skills processes in a system for teaching thinking skills than to include so many that the result is too much confusion for both teacher and student. The C.A.S.E system attempts to reflect that recommendation.

While piecing together the C.A.S.E system, the developers focussed at the needs of teachers and students as well as what the literature indicated. Teachers, the developers believed, were busy people faced with many demands from a myriad of constituencies not the least of which were the many students they faced on a regular basis. Believing this, it was determined that ease of application was necessary. Additionally, students needed to be challenged to think independently. Throughout the development of the C.A.S.E. system, therefore, the following premises were constantly considered:

1. brain-based approaches to learning,
2. important thinking skills processes that should be stressed, and
3. simplicity of use, yet not simplistic.

The C.A.S.E system is a strategy that accurately reflects those three considerations. If applied, it serves teachers well in their attempt to individualize instruction in a challenging, non-threatening manner.

DESIGN

The C.A.S.E. model presented in Figure 1 illustrates a conceptual framework involving aspects of the cognitive taxonomy, higher-order thinking skills and specific learning tasks using left-brain, right-brain or whole-brain processes. The essential skills and understandings developed and operationalized through C.A.S.E. offer vital learning experiences for students and enable them to construct and select schemata for study purposes in various aspects of the language arts.

Each vertical strand of C.A.S.E. is designed to allow study experiences to occur regardless of the specific content. Each strand also allows students to choose which type of learning experience is more relevant to their needs for a particular study situation.

Figure 2 illustrates the development of C.A.S.E as a study guide. Students may select from a variety of questions involving the various levels of the cognitive taxonomy, a gradual progression through the higher-order thinking skills and the choice of either left-brain, right-brain, or whole-brain activities.

The specific objectives of C.A.S.E, illustrated in Figure 2, are designed to enable the following behavioral outcomes to be readily assessed.

Figure 2 illustrates the development of C.A.S.E. as a study guide. Students may select from a variety of questions involving the various levels of the cognitive taxonomy, a gradual progression through the higher-order thinking skills and the choice of hemisphericity activities.

The specific objectives of C.A.S.E., illustrated in Figure 2, are designed to enable the following behavioral outcomes to be readily assessed.

Knowledge: Students quickly realize the importance of relevant vocabulary when they are able to compare word schemata from different literary genre.

Analysis: This objective deals with the importance of plot structure and the techniques employed by the author to build suspense and develop the story line. This experience trains the student to understand, "the relationships between the parts and the way the parts are organized'.

Figure 1.

CONTENT-AREA STUDY EXPERIENCES
(C.A.S.E.)

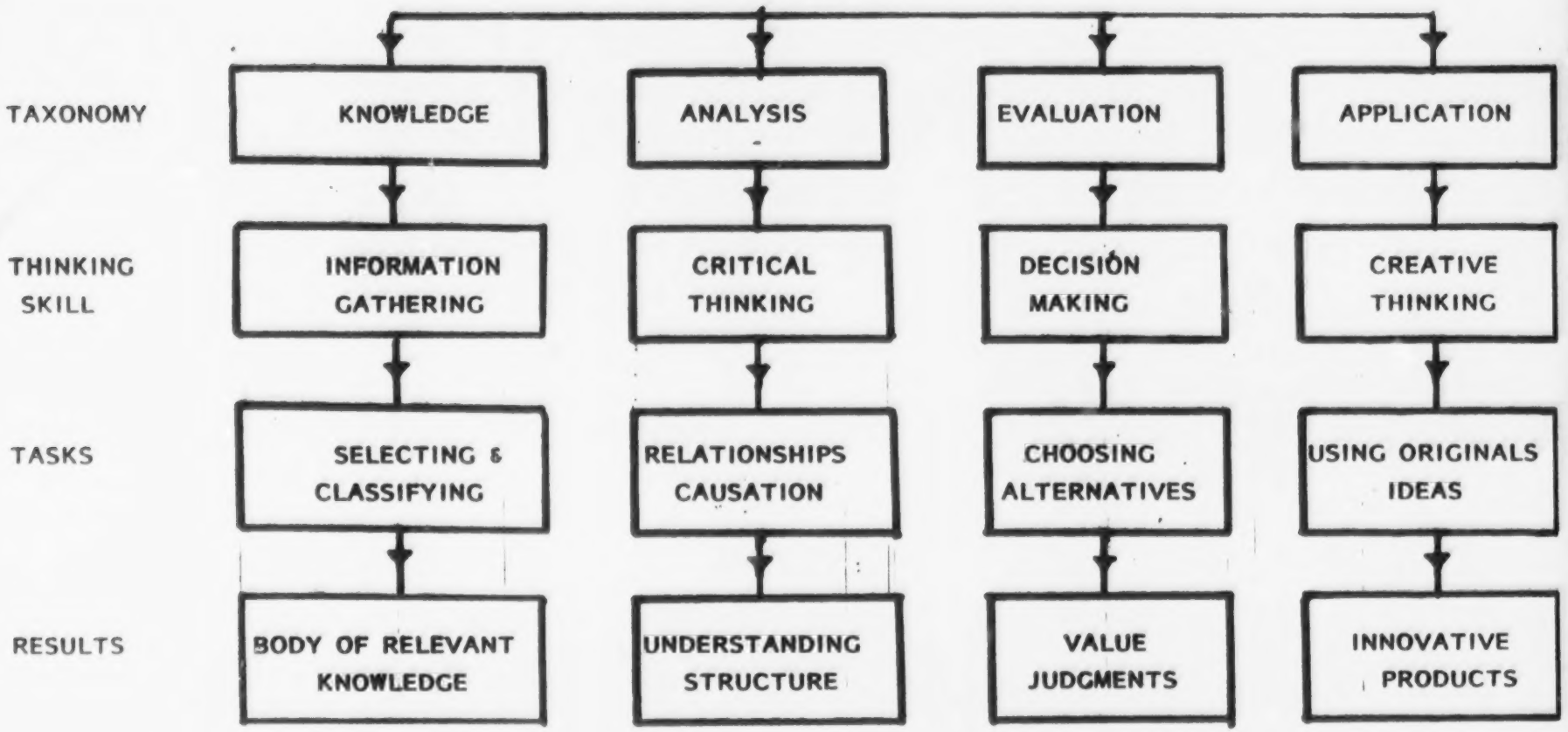

Figure 2.

CONTENT-AREA STUDY EXPERIENCES (C.A.S.E.)

SUBJECT: LITERATURE/LANGUAGE ARTS

TOPIC: _____ NAME: _____

DATE: _____

MAJOR OBJECTIVE: Study a novel/short story, or a type of prose (e.g.science fiction), or a theme (e.g. loyalty), or an author.

(N.B. Discuss with your teacher how much of the following assignment you should do).

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

1. Knowleqe:
   - a) List some of the words you didn't know and use a dictionary to explain their meaning.
   - b) Draw a schema to show how you could group certain types of words (nouns, verbs, etc.) together.
   - c) Use some of the words from the story in your schema.

2. Analysis:
   - a) Make lists of the main characters and main incidents in the story.
   - b) Construct a graph outline to show how you could plot the importance of the main incidents in the story.
   - c) Draw a graph showing the importance of the main incidents in the story.

3. Evaluation:
   - a) State reasons to explain why you liked or didn't like the story.
   - b) Develop a barometer to illustrate how you could show your opinion of the story.
   - c) Complete all details of the barometer and show your level of interest in the story.

4. Application:
   - a) Write a short description of the story for use on the book cover, or for use on the radio or T.V.
   - b) Plan an outline of a collage or visual presentation (photos, drawings, pictures, etc.) to tell people about the story.
   - c) Illustrate your written description of the story in the collage or visual presentation you have planned.

Evaluation: All students can express an opinion of their level of interest in the literature being studied. Graphics enable them to do this quickly and effectively with accompanying dialog.

Application: The end result of the study experience in Language Arts may not require that something further be done. However, this category enables students to achieve positive and practical outcomes based on their learning experience if so desired.

The C.A.S.E. system is designed to provide students with study experiences based on conceptual frameworks which transcend the limitations of content. Student participation and enjoyment of the Language Arts is also catered for through the freedom of choice and mode of expression allowed the individual. The role of the teacher, however, is still of paramount importance in this regard. The C.A.S.E. model provides numerous, on-going opportunities for teachers to have meaningful dialog with students regarding their educational needs and progress. The strategy also enables teachers of English to cope realistically with the ever-increasing number and variety of literary works available to students today.

In the new age of teacher preparation, it is becoming increasingly obvious that teachers need instructional models that give students the opportunity to develop the higher-order thinking skills and innovative techniques that will allow them to meet the challenge posed by a complex, technological world. It is with this goal in mind that the C.A.S.E system was developed.

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